

LOCAL VALUATION OF THE ECOSYSTEM SERVICES OF COMMUNITY WOODLANDS

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Community woodlands offer important benefits to local people, and the government makes additional payments to land owners who promote community access to and use of newly-planted woodlands. However, there is a lack of information quantifying the community's perception of the benefits of such policies.

A recently-planted poplar woodland (Pegnut Wood) and two mixed-broadleaf woodlands (Clapham Park and Reynolds Wood) in Bedfordshire provided three case studies for the research. Structured questionnaires were received back from 190 local residents describing their relative valuation of the services provided by the woods. This study used the ecosystem function concept of regulating, provisioning, habitat and cultural services. The survey highlighted that local residents placed greatest value on habitat and recreation services, and lowest value on regulating and provisioning services. Local residents associated potential negative effects e.g. fly-tipping and anti-social behaviour, with the woodlands and at one site this affected woodland use by local residents.